No 13

Mr. *MASSEY's* . 13

SERMON

AGAINST

INOCULATION.

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Dangerous and Sinful Practice

OF

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PREACH'D AT

St. *Andrew's Holborn,*

On *Sunday, July* the 8th, 1722.

By EDMUND MASSEY, M. A.
Lecturer of St. Alban Woodstreet.

The THIRD EDITION.

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JOB II. vii.

So went Satan forth from the Preſence of the Lord, and ſmote Job *with ſore Boils, from the ſole of his Foot unto his Crown.*

WHEN the Enemy of Mankind was firſt permitted to tempt the Faith and Patience of Holy *Job*, his Eſtate and Family only were made liable to his Power, with an expreſs Command not to touch his Perſon. Chap. 1. 12.

This I look upon to have been almoſt as great a Temptation as the ſpoiling of his Subſtance, or the ſlaughter of his Children, foraſmuch as the common Opinion of Mankind hath uſually eſteemed the ſurvival of any great Misfortune, to be the greater Unhappineſs of the two.

Under ſuch Afflictions 'tis very hard for a Man to moderate his Paſſion; for Grief is natural, and the Exceſs of it eaſily run into: But to reſtrain and curb it, and not ſuffer it to exceed its juſt Limits, to feel Sorrow as a Man, and to aſſwage it from proper Conſiderations as a wiſe Man, is a ſtrain above Nature, and properly conſtitutes that paſſive Vertue, which we call *Patience*.

Thus our Hero, being plundered of his Eſtate, and bereaved of his Children, reduced from Affluence to Beggary, and in danger that his Name, in the preſent *Generation famous*, ſhould in the next be *clean put out*, after ſhewing a juſt Reſentment of theſe ſevere Diſpenſations, by rending his Clothes, and other his Country Tokens of Diſtreſs; looking up to the Hand that ſmote him, reſolves all

Pſal. 109. 12.

all into the good Pleaſure of that Providence, which was about to reſume what it had hitherto lent; and dutifully reſigns what he had thankfully received, and wiſely uſed as a Steward only, without arrogating to himſelf the Right of a Proprietor. *Naked*, ſays he, *came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Bleſſed be the Name of the Lord!* Job 1. 21.

The ſuddain Fall of this great Man may ſerve to ſhew us, how unable all human Means are of themſelves to ſupport us, when it ſhall pleaſe God to withdraw the Bleſſing of his Protection: That we cannot be ſecure againſt the *Changes and Chances of this mortal Life*, in any Acquiſition of Power, or Riches, or Reputation, no not in *keeping Innocency*, and *taking heed to the Thing that is right*, without the Concurrence of Divine Providence: That God many times may afflict without forſaking his Servants. And when it ſhall ſeem good to him to call us forth, into the rough Paths of Suffering; if He ſhall pleaſe to *miniſh* and *bring us low*; the Example of our Text will teach us, not to behave unſeemly, or *charge God fooliſhly*, but with Pa- Pſal. 107. 39. Job 2. 22.

tience and Meekneſs, and Reſignation, and Contentedneſs, take what *He* lays upon us, whoſe is *the Kingdom and the Power*, and to whom for that very Reaſon we ſhould give, even in ſuch Circumſtances, *Glory*.

The firſt Attempt of the Devil being thus baffled, and the Sincerity of the Holy Man found to be eſtabliſhed upon more ſolid Foundations, than what the Accuſer had urged to his own, as well as *Job* his Diſadvantage; he next inſinuates that *Job* was a Man of ſo mean a Spirit, as to be glad of Life upon any Terms; and ſo prevailing was this Paſſion in him above all other, that it was the only Conſideration that kept him in his Duty to God; for fear of being *cut off from the Land of the Living*: *Put forth now*, ſays he, Job 2. 5. *thine Hand, and touch his Bone, and his Fleſh, and he will curſe thee to thy Face.* That is, afflict him in his Body, let ſome painful, ſome acute Diſtemper make his Life burdenſome, without any hope of Recovery, and his Hypocriſy will diſplay it ſelf, and you will find he will throw off all the Regard he pretends to have for God, and will openly arraign and blaſpheme his Providence.

Upon

Upon this Inſinuation, the Devil obtains Permiſſion a ſecond Time to try our Man of Fortitude, what Impreſſion bodily Pain, and loſs of Health would make upon him, whoſe Vertue under the Loſſes he had lately ſuſtained, ſtood ſtill fix'd and impregnable.

Indeed his Malice was limited, and the good Man's Life was to be ſecured, but that was more than *Job* knew: So that the *Adverſary* had all the real Advantages againſt him, that he could poſſibly deſire.

According to his uſual Way, after being once defeated, he returns to the Aſſault, with freſh Vigour and additional Strength. Temptations like Waves break in upon us, one upon the Neck of another, and commonly the laſt is the biggeſt, and goes the fartheſt. 'Twas hard upon *Job* to be deprived of his worldly Goods, harder to be bereaved of his Children, hardeſt of all when theſe were gone, to be ety worſe handled, buried as it were alive, turned into *Corruption* before his Time, by the Infliction of a ſore noiſome Diſtemper, which excluded him the Society of Mankind, and even then his Reputation, the only *uninfected* thing

thing left, as inhumanly treated as his Body. And ſo we are come to the Words of our Text, *So went Satan forth from the Preſence of the Lord, and ſmote* Job *with ſore Boils, from the ſole of his Foot unto his Crown.*

The Silence of Scripture hath given Interpreters occaſion of gueſſing at the Diſtemper, which the Devil here inflicted upon *Job*: But among them all, it appears not certainly what it was. I will therefore deſire to give an Opinion, equally I think true, with any that hath yet been taken notice of: It is this, That the Devil by ſome *venomous Infuſion* into the Body of *Job*, might raiſe his Blood to ſuch a Ferment, as threw out a *Confluence* of *inflammatory Puſtules* all over him, from Head to Foot; That is, his Diſtemper might be what is now incident to moſt Men, and perhaps conveyed to him by ſome ſuch way as that of *Inoculation.*

I do not at preſent ſee what can be advanced to invalidate this Suppoſition, which I look upon to be as tenable as any that is extant about this Matter; having this additional Advantage, that the Scene of Action lies

lies in thoſe parts of the World, whence this Practice is *confeſſedly* derived.

The Tempter's Aim was ſtill the ſame as before; to make his *Patient* let go his Integrity, throw off his Dependance upon Almighty God, and renounce that Allegiance which is juſtly due to him, as Creator and Governor of the World: To perſuade him, that if any Thing, he was the worſe for his conſtant Obedience to God, who made him ſo ſevere Returns for his faithful Services; and ſo by Conſequence comparing his paſt Deſerts and preſent Treatment together, to infer, that God was a *hard Maſter*, or that he neglected to ſuperintend human Affairs; or rather to ask *Pharaoh*'s Queſtion, *Who is the Lord?* and ſo, lay in his Misfortune a Foundation for Infidelity. Exod. 5. 2.

How in all theſe Deſigns the Devil was diſappointed, it may be well worth our Pains to enquire: In order to do this, it is not at all improbable to ſuppoſe that the Holy Man might duly conſider theſe two Points.

Firſt, For what Cauſes Diſeaſes are ſent amongſt Mankind.

Secondly,

Secondly, Who it is that has the Power of inflicting them.

Let us then accompany him in the firſt Place, in finding out the Cauſes why Diſeaſes are ſent amongſt Mankind.

I take them to be principally two: Either for the Trial of our Faith, or for the Puniſhment of our Sins.

There is nothing, generally ſpeaking, that a Man is ſo ignorant of as himſelf, nor ſo apt to be deceived in: His Love and Averſion are chiefly complexional, and not ſo often as they ſhou'd be grounded upon rational Motives. I believe I may venture to affirm, that the Religion of the greateſt part of Mankind is perfectly accidental, according to the Country they happen to be born in: Men carry their religious Profeſſion, *as the Children of Ephraim* did *Bows* and *Ar-*
Pſal. 78.9 *rows*, which they knew not how to uſe *in the Day of Battle*. The Day of Battle, in a religious Senſe, is, when any Afflictions overtake us, which in the moſt ordinary way come upon us in *diverſe Diſeaſes and ſundry*

kinds

kinds of Death. When God thus pleaſes to viſit a ſincere Profeſſor, he marks him out for an Example for the reſt of Mankind to imitate; He ſets him like a lighted Beacon on a Hill, to alarm, to *let his Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee his good Works, and glorify their Father which is in Heaven* for him. Beſides, ſince *the Heart*, as the Scripture ſays, *is deceitful above all Things*; it follows, that the beſt Men cannot be ſure of themſelves until they have been proved; many Corruptions may remain unpurged, many Vices may lie concealed in them, as well as many rewardable Vertues unpractiſed: For theſe and the like Reaſons, the Apoſtle bids us *count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations*, as having ſo many Opportunities put into our Hands of *mortifying all our evil and corrupt Affections, and daily proceding in all Vertue and Godlineſs of living.* To ſee a good Man acting upon Principle under all Diſadvantages, to ſee him with *Joſeph* eſteem a Jayl no Evil, in compariſon of committing a Sin againſt God; or with *Daniel*, account being devoured alive no Evil in compariſon of living without God in the World for thirty Days; or with *Job*, holding a dreadful Diſeaſe no Evil in compariſon of *letting go his Integrity,*

Mat. 5. 91

Jer. 17. 9.

James 1. 2.

Office for Baptiſm.

Gen. 39. 20.

Dan. 6. 16.

tegrity, are noble Trials and Inſtances of that *ſaving*, that *juſtifying* Faith, which *worketh by Love*, and are recorded to ſhew how greatly our Nature is capable of being exalted in this Life, although *common Humanity* reaches not ſo high.

Secondly, Diſeaſes are ſent, if not for the Trial of our Faith, for the Puniſhment of our Sins.

Bad as the World is, it would ſtill be worſe if the Wickedneſs of Mankind ſhould be ſo ſucceſsful as to meet with no more rebuke than it would willingly ſuffer. But Sin, as it is always the deſerving, ſo it is often the procuring Cauſe of Afflictions in this Life, as appears from our Saviour's Admonition to the Man in St. *John*, whom he had lately healed; *Sin no more* (ſays he) *leſt a worſe Thing come unto thee*: And he had already been puniſhed with a bodily Infirmity thirty eight Years together. St. *Paul* alſo gives the profane Behaviour of his *Corinthians* as a Reaſon why many of them were *weak and ſickly*. After theſe Patterns our Church adviſes thoſe who languiſh upon the Bed of Sickneſs, to *examine themſelves for what Cauſe this Evil is come upon them*; *whether* (as before has been

John 5. 14.

1 Cor. 11. 30.

Office for viſiting the Sick.

been urged) *it be to try their Patience, and that their Faith may be found in the Day of the Lord, laudable, glorious and honourable, to the encreaſe of Glory and endleſs Felicity: Or whether it be ſent to them to correct and amend whatſoever doth offend the Eyes of their Heavenly Father.* For if, as the Scripture aſſerts, God *doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*; that is, afflict Men merely for the ſake of correcting them, nor take Pleaſure in their Sufferings as ſuch; it will follow, that to one of our aforementioned Reaſons, *viz.* either the Trial of our Faith, or Puniſhment of our Sins, all his Viſitations are to be attributed. Lam. 3. 33.

Some Sins it pleaſes God to ſtrike immediately in a more remarkable Manner, as he did *Herod*; while others do naturally, and by degrees, advance to the Puniſhment they deſerve: Thus habitual Drunkenneſs and Adultery, will ruin Health, and impair Eſtates, and induce a diſtempered old Age as the natural Conſequence of a riotous youthful one. This alſo gives us to conſider, that Diſeaſes are not only *judicially* inflicted for paſt Offences, but graciouſly alſo deſign'd to *prevent* future: And a little Recollection will Acts 12. 23.

tell a Man, whether he has not often been kept Virtuous through fear of the Conſequence, even when Inclination has gotten the better of his Duty. Hence ſome are made Honeſt for fear of a *Priſon*; others continue Chaſte for fear of *Infection*; a great many are Juſt for fear of *loſing their Character*; and no doubt ſeveral are Religious, more out of fear of *going to Hell* than any thing elſe. So that we ſee the worſt of Evils have their Uſe, and in this Senſe, and by proper Reflection, we may make a Moral of the *Devil* himſelf.

Should all Reſtraints of this Sort be taken away, were there no fear of Puniſhment in this Life, nor belief of any in the next; ſhould Iniquity and Reputation be join'd together, and Health be Handmaid to Uncleanneſs; we may conjecture from preſent Diſorders, how mightily they would encreaſe, and irremoveably be eſtabliſhed; ſo that we have good Reaſon to bleſs and praiſe Almighty God for the wholeſome Severities ordained for Offenders, without which, the World would be a much more uncomfortable Place to live in, than it is at preſent. And this brings me to the ſecond Conſideration, which is,

Secondly,

Secondly, Who it is that hath the Power of inflicting Diſeaſes upon us.

Our Text indeed aſcribes *Job*'s Diſtemper to the Power of the Devil; but the foregoing Verſe ſhews *that Power* to have been delegated to him, and limited by Almighty God, who alone being Omnipotent, the Powers that be, whether *Natural* or *Political*, muſt all be derived from him. 'Tis true, he has communicated ſeveral Parts of his Sovereignty to the Sons of Men, but ſtill the Exerciſe of it will ultimately be reſolved into his Permiſſion. And it is as true, that there are ſeveral Branches of Authority, which he has reſerved to himſelf, in diſplaying of which, he acts upon Prerogative, and without human Intervention. I chuſe to inſtance in the Infliction of Diſeaſes, which I will attempt to prove are utterly unlawful to be inflicted, by any who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians. Indeed where the Doctrines of Salvation are not known, and a regular Dependance upon Providence is poſtponed to the abſurd belief of a *Fatality*; there it is no wonder to ſee Men give into impious or unreaſonable Practices: But in a Country, where

where better Principles are *eſtabliſhed*, where God's Government of the World is for the moſt Part undiſputed, and ſlaviſh implicit Belief happily ſuperſeded by rational Enquiries; in ſuch a place, methinks, Men cannot eaſily be reconciled to a *Practice*, which abuſes their *Underſtanding*, as well as inſults their *Religion*; and if the received Notions of God's Providence be juſt, has its Foundation in *Ignorance*, and muſt be maintained (if at all) by *Preſumption*.

The Holy Scriptures give us frequent Inſtances of God's giving Power unto Men to *heal Diſeaſes*; and by his Bleſſing a Power is ſtill continued: But that one was ever granted to *inflict Diſeaſes*, will I think hardly appear; unleſs in the Caſe of *Moſes* with the *Egyptians*, and *Eliſha* with his Servant *Gehazi*: But both theſe Caſes were miraculous, and of God's own immediate Appointment, to vindicate the Honour of his Servants the Prophets, and for the Puniſhment of *Sacrilege* and *Idolatry*, and cannot be drawn into Precedent by any not inveſted with the ſame Character and Authority. Men may, and have invented Wracks and Tortures for each other, but no Man, let his Crimes be what they

Exod. 9. 10.
2 King. 5. 27.

they will, was ever yet condemned to an immediate Sickneſs, or ſentenced to lie languiſhing in a Fever, for want of a ſufficient Authority, which no Body but a preſent Set of *adventurous Practitioners* have of late pretended to aſſume.

It will eaſily be granted, therefore, that ſuch a Procedure, for want of a *competent Authority*, is unlawful: That if Diſeaſes, as beforementioned, are ſent unto us for the *Trial of our Faith*, or the *Puniſhment of our Sins*; He alone to whom our Faith muſt *approve* it ſelf, and our *Sins are manifeſt*, has *properly* the Power of inflicting them.

Remembring then our Text, I ſhall not ſcruple to call that a *Diabolical Operation*, which uſurps an Authority founded neither in the Laws of *Nature* or *Religion*, which tends in this Caſe to anticipate and baniſh *Providence* out of the World, and promotes the encreaſe of *Vice* and Immorality.

That a modern Practice has a direct tendency to all this, I offer the following Conſiderations to evince.

1. A *Natural* or *Phyſical* Power does not always infer a *Moral* one: That is to ſay, a Man cannot *lawfully* do every Thing that is in his *Power* to do. Thus we abſtain from Acts of Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, although they may be gainful to our ſelves, out of regard to *Morals*, notwithſtanding they lie within the Compaſs of our Abilities. Thus the Apoſtle adviſeth us, *Not to let our Good be evil ſpoken of*; that is, not to do any unwarrantable Action, for the ſake of any ſubſequent Benefit: Becauſe the end, however good *intentionally*, can never *juſtify* in Law, nor *ſanctify* in Religion, the uſe of Means that are bad, to come at it: But on the contrary, the uſe of bad Means deſignedly, corrupts the Morality of the intended Good: For to make an Action good, 'tis neceſſary that *all its Parts*, be lawful, innocent, and good alſo; whereas the Depravity of *any One*, is ſufficient to denominate that *whole Action*, Evil: Now the Apoſtle forbids us to do *Evil*, tho' *Good ſhould come of it*, upon Pain of Damnation, which abſolutely prohibits all unjuſtifiable Arts and Practices, be the Event never ſo beneficial and deſirable; ſo that although we have a Power to give a Man a Diſeaſe, that, is,

Rom. 14. 16.

Rom. 3. 8.

is, tho' we know the Way how it may be done; ſince a bare *Power* or *Knowledge*, does not infer the *Morality* of ſo doing; till that is aſcertained, we ought to forbear all Experiments of that ſort: For even *Uncertainty* and doubting in moral or religious Caſes, lays a poſitive, or at leaſt a prudent *Reſtraint* upon Practice, becauſe, as the Apoſtle ſays, *Whatſoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* The *Patient* of our Text, at the Verſe but one following, refuſes to procure a Good to himſelf at the Price of a Sin. Had he followed the Advice there given him, it might perhaps have eaſed him of his preſent Pain, and freed him from future Apprehenſions, but ſtill the *Remedy* would have been worſe than the *Diſeaſe*, and what the *fooliſh Preſcriber* would have given for *good Phyſick*, the unhappy *Patient* would have found *miſerable Divinity.*

Rom. 14. ult.

2. The Good of Mankind, the ſeeking whereof is one of the Fundamental Laws of Nature, is, I know, pleaded in Defence of the *Practice* I contend againſt: But I muſt profeſs my ſelf at a Loſs, to find or underſtand, how *that* has been, or can be promoted hereby: For if by *Good*, be meant the *Preſervation of Life*, it is in the firſt Place a

Queſtion, Whether *Life* be a *Good*, or not? But if it be, the Preſervation of it will be found as little beholden to *this Practice*, as any other Invention whatſoever. The confeſſed Miſcarriages in this new Method, are more than have happened in the ordinary Way: And if this be our Caſe now, how much worſe muſt it needs prove, if God for our *Preſumption, and contemptuous Diſtruſt* of his good Providence, ſhould ſuffer this *Deluſion* to gain Ground, and theſe *Phyſicians of no*
Job 13. 4. *Value, theſe Forgers of Lies* (as *Job* expreſſes it) to obtain and grow into Credit among us: Such I fear they may be accounted, who ſo confidently tell us what is impoſſible for them to know; namely, that *they who undergo their Experiment are for ever thereby ſecured from any future Danger and Infection:* This is a bold Aſſertion indeed, and if ſuch Experiment were *lawful* and conſiſtent with the Rules of *Chriſtian Practice*, I could wiſh to God it were true alſo: But if neither of theſe be the Caſe, if the two Requiſites, *Prevention*, and *Lawfulneſs* be wanting; I believe I may venture to affirm, that the moſt learned and judicious among the *Profeſſors* of Phyſick, will never give into ſo deſtructive a Scheme. And I hope the Time is coming, that theſe

Vene-

Veneſici, theſe *Spreaders of Infection*, will be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of the *Faculty*, who *deſerve Honour*, and not permitted to mingle with them, as the Devil among the Sons of God, leſt like the *Diſeaſe-giving Practitioner*, the Harlot whom *Solomon* deſcribes, they *entice us, till a Dart ſtrike through our Liver, and we haſte to their Snare, not knowing that it is for our Life.* Beſides, I cannot apprehend how it conduces to the *Preſervation* of Mankind, to force a dangerous Diſtemper upon them, which poſſibly may *never* happen unto them, and if it ſhould, may *probably* be attended with very *little*, if any Inconvenience; and as before has been hinted, is no Security againſt *future* Contagion. This is unequally to ſtake a Subſtance againſt a Shadow, to make Men run into a real Danger, leſt they ſhou'd happen to fall into an accidental One, and contributes no more to the *Preſervation* of Mankind, than it would redound to the *Honour* of a well provided City, to invite the Enemy and ſurrender *now*, for fear leſt *ſometime hence*, they ſhould poſſibly be ſurpris'd and taken. If we now Thirdly,

Job 2. 1.

Prov. 7. 23.

3. Will weigh this Matter in a religious Ballance, it will certainly be found *wanting*, and *deceitful upon the Weights*. I look upon this Matter to be forbidden by the *ſixth Commandment*, as laſcivious Thoughts are by the *Seventh*. For it is always to be ſuppoſed, that a Law which forbids a great Evil, forbids alſo every Thing that has a Tendency thereto. For which Reaſon, the very next Exod. 21. Chapter forbids all *voluntary and cauſeleſs Wounding*, *Mutilation*, &c. Becauſe theſe Things go often farther than they are deſigned, even to the taking away of Life: When this happens, they are to be conſidered, as no other than a Breach of the Commandment: And it is but reaſonable to imagine, that when God forbad to take away Life, He forbad alſo the Commiſſion of any Violence, whereby Loſs of Life might *probably* enſue. Tho' the Homicide be caſual, yet if the Cauſe of it be criminal, ſurely it will be no Excuſe for it, for it is obſerved, That although the Effect which follows (if mortal) is beſide the *Intention*, yet the *Cauſe* of it being not ſo, is ſufficient to make a Man guilty before God: Men being juſtly chargeable with thoſe *Effects*, which are the *natural* Reſults of

of thoſe *inordinate* Actions, from whence they proceed.

It is written, *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God*: This was our Saviour's Anſwer to the Devil, when he would have perſuaded him to the Commiſſion of a *preſumptuous* Action. There are Angels, ſays the Tempter, to take Care of you, ſo that you cannot poſſibly come to any Harm, then make the Experiment, and *caſt thy ſelf down.* Now there is no great Difference between *this* of the Devil and the *Temptation* which lies before us; *both* intimate the *Safety* of the *Practice*, and *both* pretend the *Bleſſing of God*: Our Lord's Reproof then will ſerve them *both*: No, ſays he, we muſt not preſume upon God's Protection, to expoſe our ſelves to any *unneceſſary* Danger or Difficulty. If Trials overtake *us*, he to whom we pray *not to lead us into Temptation*, will *make a Way for us to eſcape, that we may be able to bear them*: But if we overtake them, if we *ſeek* for a *Diſeaſe*, and ſo lead *our ſelves* into Temptation, we can have no rational Dependance upon God's Bleſſing: It is with Difficulty we can ſanctify our Afflictions in the Courſe of Providence, in the way of our Duty, and 'tis odds but we miſcarry

Deut. 6. 16.

1 Cor. 10. 13.

under

under them, when we bring them upon our ſelves: If God's Bleſſing be withdrawn, it muſt unavoidably be ſo; and ſuch Circumſtances wherein we have no Reaſon to expect his Bleſſing, are, I think, by no means to be run into.

There is alſo a *tempting of the Lord our God*, when Men rely too much upon themſelves, and put their Truſt in one another, without calling upon God for his Aſſiſtance, or praying to him to guide and direct them: Under theſe two Temptations the *Practice* I condemn, is fairly to be ranked. In the former we *throw our ſelves off the Pinacle*; in the latter, we *lean upon a broken Reed, which will go into*
Ha. 36. 6. *our Hand and pierce it*: And it is but juſt in Almighty God, when we preſume too far, to *puniſh* our Raſhneſs, when we miſplace our Confidence to *viſit* for our Idolatry.

Eccluſ. 38. 1. The Honour due to a Phyſician, which the Son of *Sirach* adviſes us to pay him, ariſes from his being an Inſtrument in the Hand of Providence, to *reſtore Health*, and to *prolong Life*: This he does by Virtue of a wonderful Inſight into the nature of the Mineral and Vegetable World, by which, 'tis probable, the

Life

Life of Man was ſpun out to ſo great a Length before the Flood: It may be this was that *Tree of Life* which *Adam*, our *firſt Phyſician*, as well as *firſt Parent*, was diſpoſſeſſed of for his Sin; the Want of which, together with the Deſtruction of the Virtues of Plants wrought by the Deluge, may alſo be a Reaſon why Life is now ſo ſhort and precarious. But we are ſtill to remember, that how great or extenſive ſoever his Knowledge be, 'tis all the Gift of God, and like all good Gifts *cometh from above*; and under this Reflection, he *himſelf* ought always to make Uſe of, and apply it. *There is a time*, ſays the ſame wiſe Man, *when in his Hands there is good Succeſs*: *For*, continues he, *he ſhall pray unto the Lord that he would proſper that which he gives for Eaſe, and to prolong Life.* The Time of Succeſs was thought to be when the *Phyſician* ſhould *pray* for a Bleſſing upon his Preſcription. So that formerly, we find that the *Patient* was *prayed for*, before his Caſe was thought to be *deſperate*. Now *praying* for a Bleſſing upon our Undertaking, muſt ſuppoſe the Uſe of *lawful* Means, otherwiſe it is better to let it alone. And although we live in an Age, wherein Forms of Grace are for the moſt part ſet aſide, and Uſages of Piety run out of Countenance,

James 1. 17.

Eccluſ. 38. v. 13, 14.

tenance, yet I will venture to recommend this old Practice, and affirm that the Lives of Mankind would be no leſs ſecure, if all the *Guardians* of Health ſhould ſpeak *Peace* to our Houſes when they enter them, and *pray for* (I don't ſay with) all thoſe committed to their Charge; and to this Courſe of *private* Devotion add a little more Attendance on the Publick. But this by the Way.

It remains now in the laſt Place, to ſpeak of this modern *Practice*, as it tends to promote *Vice* and Immorality; I believe it will be readily granted me, that there is no one Thing ſo univerſally dreaded, as the Diſeaſe, which this *ſtrange Method* of *Practice* pretends to elude. But there is this of Good attending, that the Fear of it is an *happy Reſtraint* upon many People, who ſeem not ſo ſenſible of ſuperior Obligations, to keep themſelves in Temperance and Sobriety, and want no other Encouragement to give a Looſe to their Inclinations, than to be free from Apprehenſions of this *uncertain Viſitor*. Moſt Mens Acquaintance, I am apt to think, will furniſh them with Inſtances of Perſons who would gladly give into the Extravagance of theſe *licentious Cities*, to the apparent

parent hazard of Reputation and Fortune; did not this providential Obſtruction, like the Angel of the Lord to *Balaam*, ſtop them *in the Way*, or keep them at a ſafe Diſtance, in Health, Wealth, and Innocence. However ugly Sin may be in it ſelf, rightly conſidered, 'tis the fear of ſome ſuch Conſequence *as this*, that frequently hinders the Commiſſion of it, in ſpight of all the prevailing Invitations of *Faſhion*, Place and Opportunity. We ought then to look upon this, and all other Diſcouragements to Sin, with a thankful Eye, and bleſs that wiſe Providence which has mercifully ſet ſuch checks upon Iniquity, that we may not run ſmoothly on unadmoniſhed to our Ruin. Could then theſe *bold Practitioners* leſſen the Severity of this Diſeaſe; could they entirely ſecure Men from Danger under it, could they ſay to the Diſtemper, as Almighty God does to the proud Waves of the Sea, *Hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no farther*; could they, I ſay, do all this, I do not ſee what Good Mankind would get in the main; they would, 'tis true, have one Danger leſs to fear, but that would be no real Kindneſs; foraſmuch as it would be the Occaſion of their running into a great many more, and if they ſhould happen

Num. 22. 31.

Job 38. 11.

to be *more healthy*, 'tis a great Chance but they would be *less Righteous*.

If Security wou'd make Men more diligent in their Callings, more just and honest in their Dealings; or if they would look upon it as a Mercy, and be thankful to God for the Enjoyment of it; I could wish the Generations of the World were more healthy and strong. But the Negligence of Men in these Particulars, even with all their Infirmities about them, makes it evident to Demonstration, that these good Effects would not follow: If Danger should be removed, we shou'd be the less upon our Guard, and lie more open to other Assaults of the Tempter, and give more easily into the Commission of many Sins, which then would also more easily *beset us*. In a confirmed State of Health we are not so apt to consider our latter End: Or if we do, the Consideration does not so much affect, because of its supposed Distance: But when we find it by any Indisposition, or the fear of any, making nearer Approaches, when the Pleasures of Health are abated, and human Enjoyments have lost their Relish, when a Man's Spirits begin to sink, and his Body decay; this awakening Call, is much more persua-

ſive than the Voice of Eloquence, or Force of Reaſon, to make a Man improve the Thoughts of his Diſſolution to the beſt Advantage. I have before obſerved, that Life it ſelf may not always be a Bleſſing: For that depends entirely on the good Uſe that is made of it: It had been better for them, if ſome Men had never been born; if others had died in their Infancy. No doubt but Providence has a good and beneficial Deſign in all thoſe Deaths, which we improperly call untimely; either the Good is taken to his Reward, or the Wicked hindred from encreaſing his Puniſhment. What Reaſon then for this ſaving, this anti-providential Project, this pretended Art of Preſerving, which thus tends in a great Meaſure to prevent that religious Watchfulneſs, which Chriſtianity, as a Warfare, requires? Should we not rather, with the ſame Mind, endure our preſent Eſtate, whatſoever it be; as we paſs through a hard Winter, or a Time of foul Weather, taking it for ſeaſonable and fit, becauſe the wiſe Author of Nature has ſo ordered and appointed it?

And now upon the whole, what is all this Diſcourſe, but a Perſuaſive to depend upon

the good Pleaſure of an *all-wiſe* God, rather than throw our ſelves into the preſumptuous Hands of *fooliſh and unskilful* Men; and with
2 Sam. 24. 14. *David* to ſay, *Let us now fall into the Hand of the Lord, for his Mercies are great, and let us not fall into the Hand of Man.* If we believe that he who made the World does ſtill guide and govern it, and ſees and knows every Action of our Lives; if we believe the Apoſtle,
1 Pet. 5. 7. who ſays, *God careth for us*; or our bleſſed
Mat. 10. 30. Saviour, who aſſures us, that *the very Hairs of our Head are all number'd*; that is, the moſt minute Circumſtances of Life happen not unto us, without God's Permiſſion or Appointment: If we believe this, the Senſe of living under ſuch a kind and watchful Government, ſhould give us a ſuitable Awe of it, a reverential Regard for it, and a firm and ſteady Dependance upon it. Let me ask the Apoſtle's
1 Cor. 10. 22. Queſtion: *Do we provoke the Lord to Jealouſy? or are we ſtronger than he?* Shall we preſume to rival him in any Inſtance of Providence, find fault with his Adminiſtration, take the Work out of his Hands, and manage for our ſelves? A dangerous Experiment this! and not to be made with impunity, unleſs as we thus pretend to be *wiſer*, we prove our ſelves *mightier* than he. But let us not be deceived

with vain Expectations; he who perfectly knows our Frame, knows what is fitteſt for us to *endure:* He who knows our *Vertues*, knows the propereſt time to *try* them; and he who knows our Sin, knows alſo the beſt manner how to puniſh us for it. Nothing becomes us like Submiſſion, which if it be voluntary will be graciouſly accepted and rewarded as a Virtue; if involuntary, it will become our Sin, and even at laſt we *muſt ſubmit.*

Let the *Atheiſt* then, and the *Scoffer*, the *Heathen* and *Unbeliever*, diſclaim a dependance upon Providence, diſpute the Wiſdom of God's Government, and deny Obedience to his Laws: Let them *Inoculate*, and be *Inoculated*, whoſe Hope is only in, and for *this Life!* But let us, who are better inſtructed, look higher for Security, and ſeek principally *there* for Succour, where we acknowledge Omnipotence: Let us not ſinfully endeavour to alter the Courſe of Nature by any preſumptuous Interpoſition: Let us bleſs God for the Afflictions which He ſends upon us, and the Chaſtiſements wherewith He intends to try or amend us; beſeeching him to grant us *Patience under them*, and in his good Time a

happy

happy Deliverance from them. Let us remember, that with him alone are the Iſſues of *Life* and *Death*, *Health* and *Sickneſs*: Let the *Ignorant* and the *Tranſgreſſor* place their Confidence elſewhere, but let us evermore believe, and practiſe as if we believed, *That the Salvation of the Righteous cometh of the Lord, who is alſo their Strength in the time of Trouble*: That the *Lord ſhall ſtand by them and ſave them*, that *He ſhall deliver them out of the Hand of the Ungodly* (and Unskilful) *and ſhall ſave them, becauſe they put their Truſt in him.*

Pſal. 37. 40, 41.

Now to God the Father, *&c.*

FINIS.

THE Reader will obſerve, that I meddle not in this Matter otherwiſe than as it ſeems to me to be Irreligious. If he would be ſatisfied of the *Danger* and *Uncertainty* of it in a Phyſical way, let him conſult Dr. *Wagſtaffe*'s admirable Letter to Dr. *Friend*, and I dare promiſe him ample Satisfaction.